

NORTHEAST OREGON WILDLIFE MITIGATION PROJECT 9608000

SHORT DESCRIPTION:

Acquisition and management of 16,500 acres adjacent to the Hells Canyon NRA and mainly south of the Grande Ronde River and West of the Snake River, to mitigate losses from the Lower Snake River Dams.

SPONSOR/CONTRACTOR: NPT

Nez Perce Tribe

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SUB-CONTRACTORS:

N/A at this time.

GOALS

GENERAL:

Provides needed habitat protection

WILDLIFE:

Habitat

NPPC PROGRAM MEASURE:

No data file

RELATION TO MEASURE:

The project mitigates wildlife losses caused by hydropower production on the lower Snake River below Lewiston.

TARGET STOCK

LIFE STAGE

MGMT CODE (see below)

River Otter

Canada Goose

Mallard

Ring-necked Pheasant

California Quail

Chukar

Mule Deer

Western Meadowlark

Marsh Wren

Yellow Warbler

Song Sparrow

Downy Woodpecker

AFFECTED STOCK

BENEFIT OR DETRIMENT

Wild Steelhead

Beneficial

BACKGROUND

STREAM AREA AFFECTED

Stream name:

Joseph Creek

Stream miles affected:

Not known yet

Hydro project mitigated:

The Lower Snake River complex of dams, Lower Granite, Little Goose, Ice Harbor and Lower

LAND AREA INFORMATION

Subbasin:

Grand Ronde

Land ownership:

Tribal

Acres affected:

16,500

Monumental losses were evaluated in one study and have never been attributed to individual projects. Likewise all the wildlife mitigation has been attributed to all four dams rather than to an individual facility.

Habitat types:

10,300 acres of project lands have been acquired but not inventoried. The cover types are riparian, forested and native grasslands.

PURPOSE AND METHODS

SPECIFIC MEASUREABLE OBJECTIVES:

The project is the subject of an agreement between the Nez Perce Tribe and the BPA. The agreement is being implemented via a contract. To successfully complete the contract the project must produce at least 5,000 habitat Units. According to the terms of the agreement the actual benefits of the project will be determined through gathering of data from the land acquired. Both BPA and the NPT believe the final benefit total will be closer to 10,000 habitat Units.

CRITICAL UNCERTAINTIES:

Adequate funding for wildlife mitigation in the Columbia River Basin.

BIOLOGICAL NEED:

The Pacific Northwest Power Planning and Conservation Act includes provisions to mitigate for the wildlife impacts of hydropower development within the Columbia River basin. The Northwest Power Planning Council has developed a list of the impacts throughout the basin that Bonneville Power Administration is responsible for mitigating. This project is expected to mitigate for approximately half the outstanding wildlife losses amended into the Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Program caused by the Lower Snake River Dams. The habitat to be acquired contains native grasslands and riparian habitats the Power Planning Council has rated as a priority to obtain and protect. More than 25 individuals and agencies, including the Governors of both Oregon and Washington, have endorsed this project.

HYPOTHESIS TO BE TESTED:

N/A

ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES:

N/A

JUSTIFICATION FOR PLANNING:

N/A

METHODS:

The methods used are similar to most wildlife mitigation projects in the basin. Land will be acquired, protected, managed and enhanced to benefit several wildlife species. The methods will only involve tested procedures. The project does not rely on new or untested methods to achieve project goals.

PLANNED ACTIVITIES

SCHEDULE:

<u>Planning Phase</u>	<u>Start</u> 1996	<u>End</u> 2001	<u>Subcontractor</u>
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<u>Task</u> FY 96 - The Tribe entered into an agreement and subsequently a contract with BPA to implement the project. A total amount of funding was identified for land acquisition, inventories and management plan development. FY 97 - The Tribe acquired title to 10,300 acres of land in November of 1996. The search for the remaining 6,200 acres continues. Early plans to implement plant and animal inventories for the summer are being initiated for the land acquired as this is written. The			
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inventories will probably last two field seasons. The Tribe will initiate an agreement to provide fire protection for the property. FY 98 - By the end of the year the project lands should be acquired. The inventories will be completed and a management plan, supported by public review, will be initiated. Early protection and management measures will be instituted. FY 99 - The Tribe will complete the management plan for the project lands and implement management of the project lands. FY 00 - Continue habitat management and protection.

PROJECT COMPLETION DATE:

N/A

CONSTRAINTS OR FACTORS THAT MAY CAUSE SCHEDULE OR BUDGET CHANGES:

None known. But certainly putting land acquisition on a schedule with willing sellers is hard to do. The floods in NE Oregon in 1/97 have also shown us there may be additional costs that were not evaluated.

OUTCOMES, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

SUMMARY OF EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Expected performance of target population or quality change in land area affected:

When the project is fully implemented BPA will receive credit for an estimated 9,669 habitat units of mitigation. Which assumes that BPA finds a way to provide O and M to the project over time to continue to maintain the project benefits.

Present utilization and conservation potential of target population or area:

The lands acquired and the lands under consideration for acquisition have recently been used to support cattle raising operations. The utilization of the available grass by cattle varies between owners and the needs of their operations.

Assumed historic status of utilization and conservation potential:

Archeologists believe the NPT obtained horses in the early 1700's. Before that there are no records of the Tribe having domestic stock. During the period between the arrival of the horse and the treaty of 1855 between the Nez Perce Tribe and the United States, the members of the Tribe began to keep and acquire and raise both horses and cattle. The traditional pattern of use for Nez Perce people was to spend the winters in the river canyons and the summers at the higher elevations in the surrounding Mountains. There is no doubt the Nez Perce people grazed animals in the area where the project is located today. There has been no quantitative or qualitative data available to us at this time that documents the impacts or the difference between the uses of the land by the Nez Perce people, the homesteaders that followed them or the ranchers of today. The current range trend is not known. The extent of past uses has not been documented. It is believed that a conservative approach to management of the property will slow the invasion of noxious weeds as well as preserve/enhance riparian corridors and protect the native grasslands.

Long term expected utilization and conservation potential for target population or habitat:

The project is designed to manage habitat and not populations. The habitat management will be designed to benefit the target species listed in the Target Species Section, with the exception of Canada Goose, Mallard and Ring-necked Pheasant. Benefits for those species will be monitored but the benefits are expected to be low because the habitat present does not lend itself to supporting those species.

Contribution toward long-term goal:

The project is expected, upon full implementation and with operation and maintenance funding, to yield approximately 10,000 Habitat Units that represent roughly 25% of the losses identified by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as being caused by the loss of habitat along the Lower Snake river due to the development of hydropower generation.

Indirect biological or environmental changes:

None are known at this time.

Physical products:

The 10,300 acres of land purchased in the first six months of the project have not been inventoried yet.

Environmental attributes affected by the project:

The creation and operation of the project will protect timber, native grasslands and water quality within the project area.

Changes assumed or expected for affected environmental attributes:

Promote preservation of climax communities of vegetation and associated fish and wildlife populations dependent on them.

Measure of attribute changes:

The project is expected to produce a minimum of 5,000 habitat units to successfully complete the contract that is implementing the agreement between the Nez Perce Tribe and the BPA. The actual value of the project in terms of habitat units by target species will be documented through field studies after the lands are acquired.

Assessment of effects on project outcomes of critical uncertainty:

N/A

Information products:

There are no information products yet since the project was only started six months ago.

Coordination outcomes:

Not applicable at this time.

MONITORING APPROACH

The methods used are similar to most wildlife mitigation projects in the basin. Land will be acquired, protected, managed and enhanced to benefit several wildlife species. The methods will only involve tested procedures. The project does not rely on new or untested methods to achieve project goals.

Provisions to monitor population status or habitat quality:

A monitoring plan will be developed as a part of the management plan which is scheduled to be completed in FY98.

Data analysis and evaluation:

The HEP methodology developed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will be used to evaluate project benefits.

Information feed back to management decisions:

The mechanism to accomplish this will be described in the management plan referred to earlier.

Critical uncertainties affecting project's outcomes:

Not applicable at this time.

EVALUATION

The region will be able to evaluate the project benefits, once quantified, and compare them to the estimated project benefits and the losses created by the inundation of habitat through hydropower development.

Incorporating new information regarding uncertainties:

While critical uncertainties associated with this project appear to be negligible at this time it is expected the management plan will incorporate a way to evaluate the management of the project lands in the future as new information becomes available.

Increasing public awareness of F&W activities:

The return of the Nez Perce Tribe to the Wallowa area as a land owner/manager after 120 years is a story that has gained national exposure. The published stories, as required by contract, mention BPA and the role of the project in mitigating a portion of the

losses caused by the lower Snake river dams. The mitigation effort has gained fairly broad exposure in the Enterprise, Oregon area. Tribal staff has also made presentations to local leaders and public in Enterprise to describe the project benefits.

RELATIONSHIPS

OPPORTUNITIES FOR COOPERATION:

FY 97 - The land in question surrounds several small tracts of land owned by the Federal Government and Managed by the Bureau of Land Management. The BLM has stated they are in favor of the project and there may be opportunities to contract management of some lands to the Nez Perce Tribe. This would be beneficial to the project to insure compatible uses on both mitigation and federal lands. Additionally the Audubon Society, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife have expressed an interest in funding either inventory or habitat enhancement projects on the project lands.

COSTS AND FTE

1997 Planned: \$1,500,000

FUTURE FUNDING NEEDS:

<u>FY</u>	<u>\$ NEED</u>	<u>% PLAN</u>	<u>% IMPLEMENT</u>	<u>% O AND M</u>
1998	\$411,393			
1999	\$227,734			
2000	\$235,325			
2001	\$242,917			
2002	\$0			

PAST OBLIGATIONS (incl. 1997 if done):

<u>FY</u>	<u>OBLIGATED</u>
1996	\$3,000,000
1997	\$1,500,000
TOTAL:	\$4,500,000

Note: Data are past obligations, or amounts committed by year, not amounts billed. Does not include data for related projects.

OTHER NON-FINANCIAL SUPPORTERS:

Twenty-five individuals or agencies have endorsed the project. The Us Forest Service, The Bureau of Land Management, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, and Wallowa County are expected to assist in the development of the management plan.

LONGER TERM COSTS:

The operation and maintenance cost identified above are expected to continue, at near the same rate, for the project to continue to produce the desired results.

1997 OVERHEAD PERCENT: The indirect rate for the Tribe for 1997 has not been approved yet.

HOW DOES PERCENTAGE APPLY TO DIRECT COSTS:

The Tribal indirect does not apply to equipment costs or subcontracts.

CONTRACTOR FTE:

The funding currently being used by the Tribe is for land acquisition, inventories of the property resources and the development of a management plan for the property. The cost of each of these activities has not been broken into individual line items. No personnel cost have been accrued or billed to the contract as yet.

SUBCONTRACTOR FTE: No subcontracts have been utilized yet.